Continued Program Renewal

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Chapter

3

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I. Introduction

Program approval has two purposes: *review for improvement* and *review for accountability*. It is the expectation that institutions of higher education in Vermont, in partnership with the VSBPE and the VTDOE, engage in on-going program assessment and improvement to enhance the experiences and quality of the educators they develop. Through the program approval process, the VSBPE holds institutions responsible for meeting Vermont's Program Approval Standards.

Vermont's ROPA process consists of an internal review (e.g., a self-study) that the institution conducts and an external review that a team approved by the VSBPE conducts in collaboration with the VTDOE. In both types of reviews, the performance of an institution and programs is measured in terms of the program approval standards. The Institutional Portfolio summarizes the findings of the internal review, or self-study, an institution and program(s) undertake, whereas the Review Team Report summarizes the findings of the external review conducted during a visit.

Vermont institutions of higher education and alternate routes wishing to remain approved educator preparation programs must be reviewed every six years in order to continue recommending candidates for licensure. The VSBPE expects, however, that programs will be engaged in on-going internal review and reflection in order to improve programs and to meet the program approval standards.

II. Self-Study

The major goals of program review are institutional self-assessment and program improvement. A self-study should be part of an ongoing process that continues throughout the six years for which a program is approved and culminates in the full program review. Chapter 2 provides detailed performance indicators for each program approval standard, required and suggested evidence charts, and scoring rubrics to guide institutions in completing a self-study and in creating the Institutional Portfolio.

The Review Team conducts a full program review which should principally serve to verify the findings of the self-study, as summarized in the Institutional Portfolio, and provide an outside perspective. An institution should continually evaluate its programs in order to align itself with current research and best practice. Continual review will also enable programs to assemble or develop the documentation needed to address the program approval standards. Some of the required data and documentation (e.g., curricular maps, surveys from program graduates, etc.) require advance planning and implementation. (Please note that Appendix C contains charts required for evidence for particular standards.)

A strong self-study would involve the ongoing, active participation of the program's preK-12 partners. Vermont's Program Approval Standards reflect the important role preK-12 educators have in developing high quality beginning educators. In addition, the belief that educator

preparation is an institutional responsibility and opportunity underscores the program approval standards. Collaboration with faculty, staff, and administrators across the institution should extend to their continual involvement in evaluating the program as well.

Appendix D offers a series of questions for each standard that may further assist an institution in self-reflection throughout the self-study process. Bear in mind, however, that each indicator must be addressed. While an institution may choose to incorporate its answers to the questions directly into the Institutional Portfolio, it is not required.

III. Developing the Institutional Portfolio

The Institutional Portfolio is a primary source of documentation for program approval as it demonstrates that an institution is meeting program approval standards. The Institutional Portfolio also serves to introduce the institution and its work to members of the Review Team and provides information that the Team will confirm on a visit. (See Appendix E for a sample of an Institutional Portfolio format.)

Although the Institutional Portfolio is prepared for the formal visit, the program documentation that is contained within the report, including data tables, should be updated on a regular basis (e.g., annually) and serve the institution's need for formative self-assessment of programs (see Appendix C). The data from this process should provide the basis for programmatic changes before full program visits occur.

A. Institutional Portfolio Style

The Institutional Portfolio should ultimately be a professional document that is complete, well-organized, and reader friendly. While the Institutional Portfolio should be written in one voice, a single person should not author the document without input from the community. The team that prepares the report should view it as forming the Review Team's first impression.

The authors should write the report so that it builds an argument of how the standard and indicators are met. All assertions should be supported by the evidence. There are no page limits, but the institution is advised to write in a concise manner that provides only the necessary responses and supporting evidence. It is presumed that additional evidence will be found in the evidence room or accessed electronically. (See Appendix E for sample formats of Institutional Portfolios.)

Institutions that have both initial and advanced programs may elect to prepare one report for initial programs and a second report for additional endorsements. If the institution chooses this option, the initial licensure report should include all routes (e.g., undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education) to the recommendation for initial licensure. A second option is for the report to begin with initial programs and then address advanced programs within each standard. Regardless of the institution's approach, initial and advanced programs must be addressed in a report. It may also be easiest to move from general information on all candidates and then to the specifics by program area. One might, for example, explain what all candidates experience and then what secondary candidates in particular experience.

B. Institutional Portfolio Format

Introduction

The report should begin with a brief introduction to the college or university and the educator preparation programs, which includes the following:

- A brief description of the institution and its mission;
- The program's theme and how it guides the program's work;
- The required chart that identifies all initial licensure and additional endorsement programs, various delivery models for each program, number of graduates of the program in the most recent year, number of candidate enrolled in each area, and other critical data (Appendix C), and;
- Any other contextual information that will assist the Review Team to better understand the institution, candidates, and the unique culture of the institution and programs.

It is not necessary to repeat information that can be found in an institution's catalogue

Addressing the Program Approval Standards

- Respond to each standard by explaining how the program addresses each indicator;
- Reference supporting evidence by either including it in the Institutional Portfolio or by noting its location in the evidence room. Only provide crucial evidence within the Institutional Portfolio;
- At the end of each standard, summarize the program's findings, and;
- Analyze the institution's performance for the entire standard. Delineate the strengths of the program (or institution) and the areas of relative weakness as supported by the evidence, and discuss possible improvements (see Appendix E).

Five-Year Plan

The program's Five-Year Plan should:

- Identify the program's areas of strengths and needs based on the analysis of the data collected for each standard;
- State goals, a timeline for meeting these goals, annual benchmarks, strategies, and the evidence that will indicate progress (See Appendix E for a sample), and;
- Be consistent with the program's theme.

C. Using the Scoring Rubrics

Rubrics to evaluate the institution and program(s) are provided for each indicator of the standard in Chapter 2. These rubrics will be used by the Review Team and can be used by the institution in its self study. The rubric assesses performance across four levels: *no evidence, emergent, approaching standard,* and *meets standard.*